

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE GIRL IN BLACK.

By W. Graham Brown.

Let Aytton, of Glenkeld, Jack and I had a most delightful walking tour in Perthshire last year, and the memory of a pathetic story I then heard still haunts me. I heard it from the lips of Dr. Balfour, of Glenlyon, an old college chum of Aytton's, with whom we spent one pleasant day.

We sat around his consulting room fire smoking. Jack, the one bachelor of the party, is one of the most argumentative men I ever met, and this particular evening he was true to character, and stuck nobly to his guns, pretty much by way of an apologia pro vita sua.

Briefly his position was this, that on the whole the influence of the "weaker sex" is not for good but for ill, and that being so, it is safer for a young man to remain unmarried than run the risk of moral and intellectual degeneration.

"Ah! how little you know," said Dr. Balfour, interrupting Jack's flow of eloquence. "Would you care to hear of a man who was rescued from worse than death by a girl to whom he spoke but once in life, and who never so much as knew his name?"

Of course, we all wanted to hear this story, and after a pause he began.

"Ah! poor Harry, my only brother, knows to-day how much a woman can do for a man. You know what student life in Edinburgh is—its temptations and failures. Poor Harry knew it to his cost, experimentally. He got into a fast set, mostly medicals—billiards, theatres, drinking bars, and all that sort of thing. And all the time his mother believed he was studying for the ministry."

"Yet through it all he was a dear, lovable fellow—open hearted, sympathetic, generous, clever, one of the kind that so often make weeks of life."

"Ah well! this sort of thing came to an end, and all owing to the influence of an unknown girl in deepest mourning. It was night—midnight almost—and Harry, who was going the pace, lounged in a tobacconist's shop near the Caledonian station. There were others there besides Harry, men—and women too."

The door was pushed gently open and a girl, timid and trembling, entered. Harry, bemused as he was with drink, saw that this was no member of his female world, but one as innocent as a babe, and as fair as innocent, and that spark of chivalry that is in every man leapt to sudden flame in Harry's heart.

"It was a common story the girl told—late train, connection lost, only one friend in Edinburgh—could they please direct her to No. 11 Heriot Row? Crushing down a great disgust at his own condition and situation, Harry offered to see the stranger to the address, and prepared to leave the brilliantly lit shop. At that moment there was a stir among the nameless women, and one threw her arms round the boy's neck and laid her flushed cheek on his. He shook her off with a muttered oath and she fell all along the floor. A vague look of dread was in the eyes of the fair girl in black as she looked first at the prostrate woman, then at Harry, who was sobbing like a boy of ten."

"The woman rose with a foul curse and disappeared in the blackness of the street. At last the girl put her hand on Harry's arm, and in a sweet, trustful voice asked him to direct her to her destination."

"On the way Harry told her the white inside of his heart, his sins, his griefs, his aspirations, his strugglings. She lis-

tened in deepest sympathy, then told him—told this student for the ministry—the story of Jesus, His love, His strength, His tenderness. It was all so very familiar to him, but it was a new Gospel, and as he turned from the door he stood alone, bareheaded in the empty street, and prayed. It was the first time for many a month.

"Ah! the days of miracles are still with us. I have seen. Why, Harry's life became such that I, who used to pride myself on what I called my uprightness, felt that I lived a black life compared to the radiant Christlike life he lived. I know now what it means to 'trust on the Lord Jesus.' He became a power for good. The sins and sorrows of a great city lay on his heart, and to-day there are scores of poor broken men and nameless women who thank God for Harry Balfour."

Dr. Balfour paused to relight his pipe, and we waited to hear the end.

"Ah! there is a pathetic end to this story—poor Harry! He became a minister in one of the most fashionable churches in the city."

"Not Dr. Henry Balfour, of St. Augustine's?" I queried in amazement.

"The same," was the quiet reply; "but you don't know why he resigned his charge so suddenly in the midst of his great popularity and success."

"I've not seen Harry since the summer of '75. He spent a week with me here, and in this very room told me all his story."

"Brother mine," he said, when he had finished. "I love Jenny McNair with my whole soul, and to-morrow I go to lay my heart at her feet. I feel, Dan, that I can do so now, after five years of probation."

"Before we left, for I went with the boy, we prayed together, and I remember to this day the yearning of his tones. Oh! Harry, dear boy," continued the doctor, as if to himself, "you saw your Jenny McNair, but never a word did you speak to her, and she never knew that one heart broke for love of her that day ten years ago. But 'he that loseth his life shall find it,' boy."

He sat for a long time gazing at the fire, and at last continued his narration.

"Harry saw Jenny McNair, saw her in her bridal vesture; heard the words 'I will come clear from the lips of his beloved in glad response to the 'Wilt thou have?' of the officiating clergyman. He staggered from the church, and I follow all, woe for the poor, dear boy."

"But," and the doctor's face brightened, "he stood the ordeal like a man and a Balfour. You have doubtless heard of a Father Anthony and the remarkable work he is doing among the fallen in modern Babylon? I always think of Father Anthony as Harry Balfour."

Jack was silent, the doctor's tale had stolen away the spirit of argument. He had a wistful look on his face as if he yearned to meet just such a woman as Jenny McNair.

As for me, I have thanked God many times in my life that I have met just such an one. She is leaning over my shoulder now, and bids me draw my pen through these last words.

But for once I'll have my own way of it.—St. Andrew.

To bring one's thoughts and actions to a material basis is to invert the pyramid. The bedrock and the primary course must be laid in something more enduring than a clipped coupon or a per cent. on investment.

A CURE FOR THE BLUES.

A doctor who has made a speciality of nervous diseases has found a new remedy for "the blues." As no drugs are administered, he has felt safe in experimenting with at least half a hundred melancholy patients, and now declares himself thoroughly satisfied with the good results of his treatment. His prescription reads something like this: "If you keep the corners of your mouth turned up you can't feel blue; and the directions for talking are: 'Smile, keep on smiling; don't stop smiling.'"

It sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Well, just try turning up the corners of your mouth regardless of your mood, and see how it makes you feel; then draw the corners of your mouth down, and note the effect and you will be willing to declare, "there's something in it."

The doctor treats his nervous patients to medicine when necessary, but when the case is one of pure melancholy without bodily ill, he simply recommends the smile cure. He has the patient remain in his office, and smile—if it isn't the genuine article, it must at least be an outward curvature of the corners of the mouth—and the better feelings follow inevitably. The treatment is followed up regularly, and the patients all testify to their good effect. It takes considerable persuasion to induce some of them to apply the cure, and, of course, the greater number of patients are women; for when a man is blue he is bound to be blue, in spite of everything, but a woman is more easily persuaded to try to find a cure.

His discovery grew out of an experience in his own home. His wife was of a nervous and rather morbid temperament, and when in a despondent mood he would ask her to "Smile a little" until the saying came to be a household joke. But it brought about good results, and then came the inspiration to try the same cure upon others.

BABIES IN ARABIA.

Life has exceptional difficulties for the babies of Arabia, especially for those who are of sufficiently high rank to be brought up according to all the ancient customs of their race. A royal baby's first toilet there consists in winding a bandage about its body after it has been carefully bathed and perfumed.

If the child be a girl, on the seventh day of her birth, holes, usually six in number, are picked in her ears, and when she is two months old heavy gold rings are attached to them, to be worn throughout her lifetime except during periods of mourning for relatives. On the fortieth day the baby's head is shaved, and the disposal of the hair is regarded as a very weighty matter. It must not be burned or carelessly thrown away, but buried, thrown into the sea or hidden away.

The fortieth day marks a turning point in the child's life. Heretofore it has only been seen by few, but now it may be seen by anybody and is regarded as fairly lunched on the tide of existence. Several charms are attached to its body for protection against the "evil eye." Everything the child uses is perfumed and covered at night with jasmine and before it is used fumigated with amber and musk and sprinkled with attar of roses.

Do thy duty, that is best;

Leave unto thy Lord the rest.

—H. W. Longfellow.

There are few acquaintances that are more wearying than the man who persists in talking about himself.